

Congressman Mike Pence stepped out of a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing with Secretary Clinton, Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen to discuss the war in Afghanistan with Martha MacCallum on the *FOX News* program ["Live Desk."](#)

Transcript:

Fox News Host Martha MacCallum: We were just listening to Robert Gibbs in the White House Press briefing and he sort of clarified this July, 2012 date to a certain extent, saying that the withdrawal of any troops on that date would be "conditions based." What's your reaction to that?

Rep. Mike Pence: Well my reaction is, first, House Republicans welcome the president's request for reinforcements. He essentially is embracing the type of surge strategy that succeeded in 2007 and 2008 in Iraq, and we welcome the call for reinforcements.

But the issue you point to, Martha, is very problematic. It's a question of what exactly does the president mean by saying we're going to begin redeployment or begin withdrawal in July, 2011. That sounds an awful lot like a timeline to us. It sounds exactly like the kind of timelines and benchmarks that liberals here in Congress tried to impose in Iraq, in one vote after another. We managed to stop them from doing that. It's never a good idea to tell the enemy when you're going to run out of your will to fight. And when I go back into the hearing, I'm precisely going to question Secretary Gates on that issue, because in the very recent past he himself has spoken against timelines as being antithetical to American military interests in the field.

MacCallum: You know, Congressman, you rightly point out that it's 2011. I said 2012 before, so I apologize for that. 2011, July, is the date that we're talking about, but you know one of the things that I think is a bit of a qualifier here is that this message of this date is not necessarily geared at the enemy. In many ways, according to what the president is saying, it's geared at the Karzai government, at Afghanistan. They're saying, we will help you; we'll give you everything we've got; our best and our brightest until this date, but you have to be with us; you have to also be putting your best and brightest out there on your side in order to get us to maintain this commitment. Do you agree that that is an important element of this, their commitment?

Rep. Pence: Oh, I don't think there's any question that continuing to help the Karzai government stand up that internal security forces, from domestic law enforcement to military security, is absolutely vital to the mission. But, I think we learned the hard way in Iraq that mixed messages simply embolden the enemy. The reality is that when President Bush went before the country in 2007, and said, I am appointing a new general named David Petraeus, I am surging forces into Iraq and we are in it to win it, it not only changed the military situation on the ground in the next six months, it changed very much the mindset of the people on the ground. We saw what became known as the 'Sunni Awakening' occur as the people of Iraq said, okay, the United States isn't going to wave the white flag and leave at some artificial date. They're here to finish it so we're going to come alongside to help them do that.